

Revelations from Goebbels' Diary

Bringing to Light Secrets of Hitler's Propaganda Minister

David Irving

At the last IHR Conference, in October 1992, I spoke about my visit to the secret Soviet state archives in Moscow, where I found the private diary of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister, microfilmed on eighteen hundred glass plates. [See: D. Irving, "The Suppressed Eichmann and Goebbels Papers," March–April 1993 *Journal*, pp. 14–25.]

I can't tell you just who tipped me off about this, as it would breach confidentiality, but there are certain German historians who are friendly to me, and one of them tipped me that the material was just waiting to be found by someone. I went to Moscow and got this material – to the unbounded rage of rival historians around the world, who couldn't believe that I, the "incorrigible," "neo-Nazi," "Fascist-scum" historian, had got the stuff for which they had been looking for 50 years.

If you're a historian dealing with the Third Reich, you know that Goebbels' diary must contain all the dirt from that era. And yet, all the vital episodes of Third Reich history, the events we're really curious about – such as the June 1934 "Night of the Long Knives," when Hitler ditched SA Brown Shirt leader Ernst Röhm, or the "Crystal Night" in November 1938, or the Reichstag fire mystery, or the inside story of the rise of the Nazi Party – are missing from the published Goebbels diary, the portion that has been in the public domain for the last 40 years or so.

One way and another, portions have trickled out. First of all there was the original typed Goebbels diary for parts of the years 1942 and 1943, which is now in the Hoover Institution library in Stanford, California. [Edited by Louis Lochner, it was published in 1948.] The National Archives in Washington acquired a sheaf of diary pages from August 1941. The French somehow got April 1943, and the Hoover library obtained six diary pages from July 1944.

Most importantly, the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich managed to get hold of further portions of the diary through negotiations with the East German Communist authorities. [See, for example, *Final Entries 1945: The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels*. New York: 1978.]

But vital passages were missing even from these, among them the year 1944 – the year of D-Day, the Stauffenberg bomb plot, and the Battle of the Bulge. And there were years for which only a couple of notebooks have hitherto been available. One begins to suspect that somebody knew they were sitting on a real treasure, and they weren't going to release it. By holding back the good stuff, they were acting in an almost capitalistic manner.

In the end, I didn't pay one bent nickel for this material. Visiting Moscow in June 1992, I simply reminded the head of the Soviet state archives that over the years three or four of my books had been published in the former Soviet Union, and he just let me have the material, assuming, I suppose, that I was therefore kosher.

It was a different situation when I returned for the second time in July 1992 to complete the work. As the week progressed, I found it getting stickier and stickier. They suddenly weren't able to find the boxes and files I'd seen the time before. I had to fight and plead and holler, and they still weren't turning up the stuff I really wanted. On the last day, the secretary of the director came out to me and said: "Mr. Irving, I've got a very embarrassing question to ask of you. Have you been stealing any material from our archives?"



David Irving speaking at the Twelfth IHR Conference (Sept. 1994).

Now, this is something that a historian just doesn't do. When you work in the archives, you're working on trust. You've an obligation to posterity. You do not permanently remove stuff. I did, however, have an arrangement with the director, who permitted me to remove certain glass plates from the archives for copying because they didn't have the requisite facilities there. They didn't even have a microfiche reader. He allowed me to remove these glass plates on my honor, and bring them back after having made the necessary photographic prints.

In an effort to stop me from gaining access, it turned out that somebody had told the archives that I was stealing material. To resolve the situation I signed a declaration stating that everything I had seen in the archives was still there, and that nothing was missing. That was, in fact, the truth.

The archives director was very pleased to have this declaration, and the secretary added the pregnant words: "The information came from Munich." Once again my traditional enemies around the world were trying to trip me up. It didn't work because by that time I'd obtained 99 percent of the material I had on my "shopping list": diary portions dealing with the Kristallnacht, the "Night of the Long Knives," the Reichstag fire, Pearl Harbor, all of 1944, the whole of the months leading up to the outbreak of World War Two – everything. I'd gotten the lot.

It was difficult, because, as I said, the Russians didn't have a microfiche reader. I suspected in advance that I might need one, because in preparation for my trip to Moscow in the 1970s I had brought with me toilet paper and a bath plug because I knew I wouldn't find them in my Moscow hotel. On this occasion I had thought to myself, "Suppose – it's incredible, I mean this is a state archives – but just suppose they don't have a microfiche reader. I'd better take something with me." So I went to Selfridge's and asked for the most powerful magnifying glass they had. What I didn't know was that the more powerful the magnification, the smaller the lens is. I wound up buying a 12x magnifier that was about as big as my little fingernail. So during the first week I was there, I had to hold it up like this to read those glass plates. But if you don't mind straining your eyesight, it works.

It's quite an unusual feeling looking at the original Nazi microfiche glass plates in the original Agfa boxes – there are eighteen hundred plates, each with 25 or 40 images on them – a total of 70 or 80 thousand pages of paper. And you know you are the first person to read them since Goebbels, in 1944 and 1945, ordered the stuff to be preserved in case of damage to the originals. No one knows now where his original notebooks are, or what happened to them. They're probably gone forever. But fortunately they were preserved on glass plates, and I was the first person to study them.

The Reichstag Fire

For example, I read for the first time Goebbels' hand-written entry about the Reichstag fire. As he described it, he was at his home with Hitler on that evening of February 27, 1933, when the phone rang at nine o'clock. It was the prankster "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, saying: "The Reichstag's on fire." Goebbels remembered that he'd been had twice by Hanfstaengl already that week, and he thought this was another prank, so he just put the phone down. Hanfstaengl phoned again and said, "You'd better listen to what I'm saying, The Reichstag's on fire." Goebbels realized this could be serious after all, so he made a phone call to the police station at the Brandenburg Gate, which confirmed that the Reichstag was on fire. Thereupon he and Hitler jumped into a car and drove straight to the Reichstag where they found their worst fears confirmed. This is in the hand-written diary, it is obviously genuine, and it confirms what we know from other sources.



Dr. Goebbels, in an official portrait.
(Courtesy of David Irving, from his forthcoming biography of Goebbels.)

Early Entries

Goebbels' diary didn't start in 1933 when the Nazis come to power; it started when he was a student at Heidelberg University, and carries on all the way until a few days before he commits suicide in 1945 with his family in Hitler's bunker. Never has there been such a contiguous source of information for historians to use, but never has there been a source more fraught with danger. Nobody's diary is genuine, because everybody lies to his diary. Okay, "lie" is a bit sharp. Everyone is a hero in his own diary. So what do you believe? That's the way it is with diaries. You've got to know how to evaluate them. What Goebbels writes in his diary about Goebbels, you treat with suspicion. What Goebbels writes in his diary about a fight between Rosenberg and Koch is probably more accurate, although he's got his sympathies there, too. You have to learn to be very careful.

I'm saying this for a reason, because when we come to look at what the diary says about the Crystal Night, it's not what you expect it to say, and you can only really straighten things out when you accept that Goebbels has his reasons for writing things in a certain way. I'm something of an expert with diaries, because I've been looking at people's diaries as an historian for the last 30 or 40 years, and I know the things to look for.

It always amuses me the way people write in their diaries certain euphemisms for relations with the opposite sex. I won't describe to you which words I use in my diary, but – okay, I will. I might write, "Lucy came 'round, and was amiable." It seems pretty harmless, but it's code. This becomes obvious if you slip up and write, "Lucy came round and was amiable twice."

I had the private diary of Luftwaffe Field Marshal Erhard Milch, who had the habit of putting a little X on the line between two days in his diary. Some days, however, there were two Xs, and on one occasion, during the battle of Stalingrad when he was in Berlin, there were three Xs followed by the initials "E.H.," all done into a kind of monogram or logo: "XXX E.H." I happened to know that "E.H." was Edith Hesselbarth, his private secretary. When I tracked her down at her home on Lake Constance, she was most indignant about this imputation, until I told her that Milch had written it in his diary, whereupon she confessed.

In the case of Dr. Goebbels, everybody knows that he has gone into history as the arch-Casanova of the Third Reich. He was the one with the string of amours, and no film starlet could make headway in the German film industry, so legend has it, without using the Minister's casting couch. And yet, it turns out, unless I'm grievously wrong, he was age 33 when he first had a sexual experience with a woman. If you read his diary you could be misled. Very early on in his diary, he's talking about how Else came 'round, and she was all his: "She was all over me." It's an imprecise phrase, but you're willing to believe, given his reputation, that this could only mean one thing.

In another passage, Anka Stalherm, the great heroine of his life, comes to see him and there's an episode on the meadow in Freiburg: "the first kiss." It's only when you start reading through the diary, and the letters that pass between her and Goebbels over the next ten years, that you realize that that first kiss was, in fact, a kiss on the cheek. That's as far as he got with her.

I subsequently found Anka Stalherm's daughter. Because I thought it would be a bit embarrassing to ask her how far her mother had gone with the Nazi Propaganda Minister, I planned on making this my last question before I beat a retreat. As I walked in through the door, though, she said: "Mr. Irving, before you even begin this interview, I want you to know what my mother told me about Goebbels, which is that she never, ever, did it with him. She found him intellectually fascinating, a man of enormous presence, but physically repulsive." Goebbels was 5'4", just over 100 pounds, a club foot with one leg two inches shorter than the other – a bit of a freak, in other words. He never got anywhere with Anka Stalherm, although if you read his diary you would imagine that she was the great love of his life.

How do we know he was 33 when it first happened? The answer is that he started going out with Olga, the girlfriend of Mr. Arnolt Bronner. (He had a predilection for dating other men's girlfriends; a dangerous habit if you're only 5'4".) He went out with this woman, and she comes 'round, so to speak. Obviously something happened because that night he writes in his diary all the words of euphoria followed with the figures in parenthesis: "(1, 2)." This might, by itself, mean nothing at all, were it not for an entry a few days later, with Olga coming 'round again, and new figures in brackets: "(3, 4, 5)." Well this is rather like being "twice amiable," isn't it? It's a bit of a give-away, and given what we know about the kiss on the cheek, which was all he'd gotten in previous years, you can be pretty certain what this denotes. This happened in December 1930, and he was born in October 1897.

She is only one step ahead, so to speak, of Magda Quandt, who later became Magda Goebbels – the divorced, blonde, well-to-do wife of a German industrialist, who fell for him. In mid-February 1931 – after many, many weeks of working for him in the archives and so on – she comes 'round to his apartment, and you get the same brackets treatment. It's "(1)", and then "(2)", "(3)", and then, on March 1931, "(4)" and "(5)". Five episodes spread over six weeks. There again, you've got a certain amount of support for the belief that he wasn't as active as he made out in later years. If there was anything he was good at, it was propaganda. So we're demolishing a bit of a propaganda legend in connection with Dr. Goebbels here. Amusing as this is, it helps to teach us to be very cautious when dealing with someone's diary as a source of information.

Growing Anti-Semitism

I've gone through the diary with a special interest in the Jewish issue, and particularly the "final solution." There's no question that whatever tragedy befell the Jews in Germany during the Third

Reich, Dr. Goebbels himself was the prime moving force behind it. He wasn't just the person who created the atmosphere of hatred, he was also the one who pulled the levers and started the trains in motion. What happened at the other end is still a matter of debate, and this issue is one of the moving causes of revisionism at this moment.

Goebbels didn't start out anti-Semitic. His very early diary pages, back in 1923, contain no references to the Jews, or any anti-Semitism at all, in fact. We do know that in his home town of Rheydt, a close neighbor with whom his parents maintained very close relations was Dr. Josef Joseph, a Jewish lawyer. There was a long-standing friendship between him and Goebbels' parents, who often sent their son 'round to spend the day with Dr. Joseph. (Goebbels' father, Fritz Goebbels, was bookkeeper at a local textile factory.) I'm inclined to believe that the fact that Dr. Joseph was such a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Goebbels, and not just the boy's Catholic upbringing and the fact that his godfather was also called Joseph, may have been the reason for Goebbels' second name: Paul Joseph Goebbels.

Goebbels met Anka Stalherm at Heidelberg University, where she was one of the few women students. She was fabulously rich, had shoulder-length blonde hair, and was a typically care-free, affluent female student. Goebbels could hardly believe his luck when, of all the young men at the university, she picked him. There was undoubtedly a very close friendship between them, and all their letters have survived. (I was able to read them in the German archives until the German government, in an act of incredible spitefulness, on July 1, 1993, ordered me banned from the archives, "to protect the interests of the German people".)

In one letter to him, Anka made a mildly anti-Semitic remark, typical of those that were common in the social circles in which she moved. Indignantly he wrote back to his new girlfriend, putting her in her place. In this letter, dated February 17, 1919, Goebbels responded: "As you know, I can't stand this exaggerated anti-Semitism. My view is you don't get rid of them by huffing and puffing, let alone by pogroms, and even if you could do so, that would be both highly ignoble and unworthy."

Furthermore, Goebbels' favorite professor at Heidelberg was Friedrich Gundolf, who was Jewish. This didn't matter to Goebbels at all. When Gundolf said that he wouldn't have time to work with Goebbels on his doctoral dissertation, he passed him on to another professor of literature, Max von Waldberg, who was also Jewish. To the end of his life, Goebbels spoke very highly of these two professors. It was typical of Goebbels that he was able to put Jews into two categories, regarding individual Jews with respect and admiration, while at the same time holding the Jewish people in contempt.

Just a few years later, though, on October 30, 1922, he delivered a lecture in Rheydt in which he commented approvingly on Oswald Spengler's criticism of the Jewish people. So you can see that a certain trend had begun to set in. I often wonder: Was this due to something innate or was it his surroundings? We are not able to pin down just what caused Goebbels to become anti-Semitic around 1922. Certainly by the time he arrived in Berlin, in 1926, as Gauleiter (district party leader), his anti-Semitism was in full flood, and, as we shall see, what he saw there completed the picture for him.

His formative experiences came in the aftermath of World War One, I think. Because of his club foot, the army had refused to accept him as a soldier, which was humiliating. In 1923 he worked in a bank in Cologne, where he was shocked by Jewish banking methods. He saw Jews ruining ordinary Germans, he saw speculation, and he saw inflation wiping out people's savings. His colleagues at the bank undoubtedly drew his attention to the Jewish role in all of it, as the private banks in Germany were almost entirely in Jewish hands.

Another factor played a role. When he left the university Goebbels was an aspiring writer of poetry, plays and newspaper articles. He wanted to write for the great national newspapers and magazines, which were largely controlled by the Ullstein and Mosse families, both of which were Jewish. His approaches to these two publishing companies, with articles submitted for publication, and subsequently seeking employment, were rudely rebuffed. The *Berliner Tageblatt* alone returned to him nearly 50 articles he had submitted.



"Judea Declares War On Germany. Jews of All The World Unite. Boycott of German Goods," proclaim headlines in the London Daily Express, March 24, 1933. "The whole of Israel throughout the world is uniting to declare an economic and financial war on Germany," the mass-circulation British newspaper goes on in its front-page report to tell readers about the international boycott campaign. This Jewish "war on Germany" was launched even before Hitler's new National Socialist government had enacted its first anti-Jewish law.

"... All Israel is rising in wrath against the Nazi onslaught on the Jews," continues the Daily Express report. "... Resolutions are being taken throughout the Jewish business world to sever trade relations with Germany ... Germany is a heavy borrower in foreign money markets, where Jewish influence is considerable ... A concerted boycott by Jewish buyers is likely to involve great damage to the German export trade"

No surprise, if you look at the private papers of Theodor Wolff, chief editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which was published by the Mosse company. In these papers, which are filed in the German Federal archives, you can see that Wolff was corresponding almost entirely only with Jews.

It's what today we would call networking; if you're outside the loop, you can't break in. One knows this when one is mature, but when you are a young student fresh out of university, full of great idealism and belief in your own superior talents, the first realization that you can't break into the loop – that the network is there to keep people like you out – makes a great impression, as it probably did on the young Dr. Goebbels. And this undoubtedly had an effect on his anti-Semitism, even though he still wasn't hostile toward individual Jews.

After Anka Stalherm left and married another young man, Goebbels started a long affair with a young woman named Else Janke. One day, while he's commenting to her on his physical debilities, telling her he realizes he must be quite unattractive because of his club foot and all the rest of it, she says, "You think you've got problems? I'm half Jewish." This was a great shock to Goebbels at that time. Her half-Jewishness, which he described as her mixed blood, grew more and more important in the relationship until it finally led to their break-up. He was actually happy when he was named Gauleiter of Berlin, where the Nazi Party was in disarray, because this gave him a chance to leave Else Janke gracefully. In Berlin he had his eyes on another girl by the name of Josephine von Behr.

At this time he also makes friends with Julius Streicher, Gauleiter of Nuremberg and publisher of the notorious anti-Semitic weekly, *Der Stürmer*. His views on Streicher vary widely throughout his diary. Sometimes he's full of praise for him, rather the way we grudgingly admire a person who is a bit bullheaded and plows ahead regardless of the damage he does. He liked Streicher as a human being, he liked him for his courage. But then again, he strongly deprecated his brand of anti-Semitism, regarding it as needlessly vulgar. This comes out again and again in the diary. It's a dichotomy that is never satisfactorily resolved until we come to one of the last items in the archives: a February 1945 letter from Goebbels to Streicher, congratulating him on his birthday and sending him a valuable oil painting. Goebbels stayed in touch with Streicher even after he fell out of favor with Hitler.

'Isidor' Weiss

When Goebbels arrived in Berlin as Gauleiter in 1926, he was confronted by a city with 179,000 Jews, one third of all Jews in Germany, and he made use of this fact. The Berlin population already was seething because of the presence of these Jews. In the coming years, Goebbels repeatedly explained to foreign diplomats that the problem there was the usual one, in which the Jewish population disproportionately controlled all the lucrative professions. This rankled with Berlin's non-Jewish population, of course, and Goebbels, whether deliberately or by instinct, zeroed in on this as a wound that he could work on to promote the Nazi cause.

He was aided in this endeavor by the fact that his chief opponent there, Berlin's Deputy Police Chief (who acted as though he was Police Chief; even the real Police Chief referred to him as being the Chief) was Dr. Bernhard Weiss, a Jew. Weiss looked so much like a Jewish caricature that his photographs didn't need to be re-touched by the Nazis. He was stereotypically Semitic in feature: short, with rounded ears and hook nose, and wearing spectacles.

In London I located Weiss' daughter, Hilda Baban-Weiss, and I pleaded with her for a more attractive photograph of her father, pointing out that the ones I have are not very flattering. I got total silence from the daughter, so I abandoned my quest. Unfortunately, when my biography of Dr. Goebbels comes out we're going to have to use these rather unattractive pictures.

Dr. Goebbels promptly dubbed Weiss "Isidor," to such a degree of success that within two or three years there was hardly a Berliner who didn't believe that "Isidor" was his real first name.

The fight between Dr. Bernhard Weiss and Dr. Joseph Goebbels, is, I think, one of the most hilarious, improbable stories to come out of this era. Twenty-eight times Weiss sued Goebbels for calling him a



An anti-Jewish rally in Germany, 1935. The banners proclaim: "Race Lies not in the language, but in the blood" and "No World Peace Without Breaking the World Domination of the Jews." (Photo: National Archives, Washington, DC.)

From David Irving's forthcoming biography of Goebbels.)



Dr. Bernhard Weiss, Deputy Police Chief of Berlin in the years before the National Socialists came to power. Goebbels mockingly dubbed him "Isidor," a nickname meant to underscore his Jewish ancestry. (Photo: Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.)

Jew. Twenty-eight times the judges pointed out to Weiss that he was in fact Jewish, and therefore it was no libel. On one occasion, Dr. Goebbels' newspaper *Der Angriff* published a cartoon showing a donkey with the head of Dr. Weiss, with all of its legs splayed on an ice pond, and a caption reading: "Isidor on thin ice." Isidor Weiss (you see, even I'm calling him Isidor now), immediately sued for libel. Goebbels pointed out it was just a cartoon, but the judge said it was quite obvious that the donkey had the face of Dr. Weiss. Whereupon a headline in the next issue of *Der Angriff* declared: "Judge Confirms Donkey Has Face of Dr. Weiss."

A German scholar recently published a 600-page book purely devoted to the fight between Dr. Goebbels and Dr. Weiss. It would be worth having this book in English, except that the problems between the two men are almost untranslatable.

As Goebbels orchestrated the rise of the Nazi party in Berlin, part of the problem for the democrats there was that much of what he said was true. The Jewish community not only dominated the legal and medical professions in Berlin, they also dominated the crime scene. In my biography I've quoted Interpol figures of the percentage of Jews among those arrested for drug dealing and narcotics. Moreover, three-quarters of the pickpockets in Berlin were Jewish. It was quite easy for Goebbels to draw attention to such facts, and to embellish them in a propaganda campaign. This came to him as second nature. In every new scandal in Berlin, it seemed, Jews were at the base of it – ripping off the banks, ripping off the taxpayers, and ripping off the government. And again and again, they seemed to be getting off scot-free.

At Syracuse University I found the private papers of Heinrich Brüning, who was Hitler's predecessor as Chancellor (1930–1932). In this collection is a manuscript in which he describes his problems as Chancellor. Brüning recounts that at one time, he ordered an investigation of Jewish banks in Berlin and their methods, and in his manuscript he writes: "The results were so horrifying that I ordered this document to be kept secret, because if it had been allowed to become public knowledge, it would have resulted in anti-Jewish riots." Of course, even though much of what Goebbels said was true, this just doesn't justify what he did later on. We must, in all fairness, keep emphasizing this point.

During the 1920s Goebbels wrote a play called *Michael*, and it's interesting to compare the various drafts of it, which are available. When he first wrote it back in 1923 or 1924, it was a straightforward kind of morality play. But Goebbels would change things. After Anka Stalherm annoyed him, he changed the leading female character. And as he became more and more annoyed with the Jews, he wrote more anti-Semitism into the play. In the drafts you can see him becoming progressively more anti-Jewish.

After seeing his first Hollywood movie, he wrote in his diary (on Dec. 3, 1928): "Sheer hell. Jewish kitsch. Virtually all you saw were Hebrews." A few months later, on February 15, 1929, he wrote: "The Jewish question is the questions of all questions."

There is a curious passage in his private diary that shows how increasingly obsessed he had become. It was after three years in Berlin as Gauleiter, fighting this increasingly desperate battle, almost with one hand tied behind his back, being repeatedly banned on orders of Dr. Weiss, having repeatedly nearly been sent to prison himself. One night he has a dream, which he then records in his diary (December 17, 1929). In this dream he's back at school, running madly through the corridors with pillars flashing past him, and he's being chased by Jews screaming at him, "Hate, hate, hate." He's always able to keep a few limping strides ahead of his pursuers, occasionally turning round and flinging back at them the same taunt: "Hate, hate, hate!" What an odd thing for a man to write in his own diary. One doesn't often write down one's own dreams in a diary. The mere fact that he had dreams like that shows that he was becoming obsessed with these Jews, the enemy.

More and more episodes occurred to give him reasons to dislike Jews. After Horst Wessel, a young Nazi stormtrooper who composed the hymn that subsequently became the second national anthem of Nazi Germany, was murdered in early 1930 by a communist in Berlin, it was a Jew who gave refuge to the murderers when they fled. This kind of thing will have undoubtedly had an effect of Goebbels. He would have chalked it up on his list of grudges.

Even worse, after he began going out with Magda Quandt (whose stepfather, Friedländer, he knew had been Jewish), it happened that for days at a time she didn't come to see him. After a while, she doesn't answer the phone or keep dates, and eventually Goebbels finds out he has a rival: a Jew named Victor Arlosoroff, who is also enraged to find out that she's two-timing him with the Nazi Gauleiter of Berlin. Arlosoroff is so enraged, in fact, that during one meeting he pulls out a revolver, and in a jealous, dramatic scene, fires at her, deliberately missing. The bullet buries itself in the wall near her. She gets him out of her life, although he keeps returning and pleading to be taken back.

This man is none other than Victor Chaim Arlosoroff, who subsequently became an important Zionist figure. After Hitler came to power, he was the Zionist representative in the negotiations with the new Nazi government that resulted in the Haavara ("Transfer") agreement, whereby German Jews could emigrate to Palestine with their property. In June 1933 Arlosoroff was murdered in Tel Aviv, Palestine, by members of the Jabotinsky faction of the Zionist movement. The fact that the love of his life was two-timing him with an ardent Zionist may also have contributed to Goebbels' growing dislike of Jews.

Goebbels was besotted with Magda, there's no question, and once again he couldn't believe his own luck. They were married in December 1931. In fact, though, she was rather ambivalent about him, and it appears that the only reason she started dating him was, as they say, to be near the fascinating Mr. Hitler. There was even a rumor that her son, Helmut, was fathered by Hitler. When you look at photographs of little Helmut, though, you can be pretty certain that this is not true, because he looks just like Dr. Goebbels.

Boycotts

A month after the Nazis came to power in January 1933, Goebbels was really able to flex his muscles. He wasn't appointed Propaganda Minister immediately because Hitler needed Goebbels to direct his party's propaganda campaign in one final election battle, and, as Hitler pointed out to him, it wouldn't be right for the Reich Propaganda Minister, a government official, simultaneously to direct the Nazi party's propaganda election campaign.

We must not overlook the fact that the world's Jewish community lost no time in striking at Nazi Germany. We all too readily talk about the book-burning and about the Nazi boycott against the Jews as if those things happened in vacuum. They didn't. The Nazi boycott against the Jews on April 1, 1933, was a foolish reprisal by the Nazis in retaliation for the Jewish boycott against Germany.

As soon as the Nazis came to power the world Jewish community announced an international boycott campaign against Germany. Jews would not buy any German products. They would not accept any more German films, for example, and would see that others would not accept them. Jewish restaurateurs in England announced they would no longer serve German customers. If you read the newspapers of the day, such as the London *Daily Express*, you'll find all the details of this anti-German Jewish boycott, which is now all too readily forgotten. Today all we hear about is the Nazi boycott against the Jews, which lasted for a single day – Saturday, April 1, 1933. Brown shirt SA men stood outside Jewish businesses and shops, and admonished customers against entering.

As a warning to Jews abroad to go easy on Nazi Germany, the boycott failed, of course. It just enraged the international Jewish community even more. At the time, and ever since, the Nazis were effectively rapped on the knuckles for that boycott. It was Goebbels who organized that boycott, even though, if you read his diary, you can get the impression that Hitler authorized it, sanctioned it, and possibly even suggested it. But there's no doubt at all in my mind that this is another case of Goebbels having an idea, of putting it into effect, and then playing a trick by writing in his diary that he'd gotten Hitler's approval in advance. He had already done something like this in 1932, when he railroaded Hitler into an unsuccessful election campaign for Reich President against Paul von Hindenburg. In his diary he rather implies that Hitler asked him to go ahead with it and sanctioned it in advance. We see exactly the same phenomenon in November 1938: the "Night of Broken Glass."

Yet even in 1932–1933, he was still somewhat ambivalent in his feelings about the Jews. He could still split his sides with laughter, as he writes in his diary on May 16, 1933, at a nightclub listening to Jewish comedian Otto Wallburg. This same Otto Wallburg later died in Auschwitz. So there you have the whole of the tragedy of Jews and the Third Reich encapsulated in one man's fate. (You notice I used the word "died." I didn't say he was gassed or was killed or murdered at Auschwitz. He died. We don't know how he died – it's tragic enough that he did.)

The Nazi campaign against the Jews included Goebbels' systematic campaign to remove them from the theater, art and music. He argued that the Jews tried to dominate, and that this was not for the general good of the community. There was an outcry from the artists themselves, of course. For example, the internationally renowned conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, Wilhelm Furtwängler, bravely defended fellow conductor Otto Klemperer and other Jewish artists. In a letter to Furtwängler (which was published in *The New York Times*, April 16, 1933), Goebbels wrote: "Those of Jewish blood who have real ability should be free to exercise their art, but they must not rule."

Jews began a campaign of assassination against Nazis in February 1936, when David Frankfurter shot Wilhelm Gustloff, leader of the Nazi party in Switzerland. Then, in November 1938, another Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, assassinated Ernst vom Rath, a young diplomat at the German embassy in Paris.

These incidents further contributed to Goebbels' perception of the international Jewish community, namely, that Jews would stop at nothing to get back at the Nazis. All his previous Jewish enemies, such as Dr. Weiss, expecting short shrift from the Nazis, had emigrated from Germany. Some went to Prague, some to Paris, some to London, and others to the United States – from where they campaigned against Nazi Germany.

Hitler's 'Final Solution'

On April 11, 1938, the diary records a very interesting conversation in which Hitler reveals to him for the first time that his "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem is to deport the world's Jews, particularly those in Germany and in Europe, to some faraway country, possibly Madagascar. Hitler swore by the Madagascar solution. Even in July 1942, two months after the island country had been occupied by the British, Hitler is still saying that Madagascar is the ideal solution.

In June 1938, two months later, Goebbels begins an anti-Jewish campaign of his own. Six months before "Crystal Night," Goebbels and Berlin's police chief, Count von Helldorff, decided between them to start a campaign of systematic harassment of the city's Jews. Even after the Nazis came to power, the number of Jews continued to increase in Berlin, which didn't please Goebbels at all. Berlin was his city, and yet the Jews still had considerable presence and economic clout. The only way to reverse the trend, he told the police chief, is to start hounding and harassing them.

In the University of Princeton library there's a file called the Adolf Hitler papers, which consists of documents relieved in 1945 by an American soldier from Hitler's apartment in Munich. It contains a June 1938 letter from Goebbels to Hitler, reporting on this campaign of harassment. All the Jews in Berlin had their motor cars called in for inspection: most of them were found to be unroadworthy, and they were ordered off the roads. They also had their telephones cut off. Berlin's Jews were subjected to all sorts of petty police harassment such as this. It's very similar to what is happening now in Germany to revisionists – harassing people within the law, rather the way your [United States] government suddenly inflicts a tax audit on someone who is politically incorrect.

'Crystal Night'

The key event in this whole story was, of course, the "Crystal Night" ("Kristallnacht"), or "Night of Broken Glass" in 1938. Here the Goebbels diary must be treated with the utmost caution. It began on November 7, 1938, with the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan. News of the shooting triggered a number of small scale anti-Jewish outbreaks all over Germany, which Goebbels noted in his diary without at first paying any special attention to them. However, when news reached him of the young diplomat's death, two days later, it truly outraged him. It came while he was with Hitler at a meeting in Munich, commemorating the annual Nazi party anniversary of the failed "Beer Hall Putsch" of November 9, 1923.

After Hitler had left the meeting, Goebbels came to the podium to announce the death of the German diplomat. He also reported to the assembled Gauleiters on the anti-Jewish incidents that had already broken out, describing them as manifestations of a "spontaneous" public outrage. Goebbels said, in effect: "A Jew has fired a shot. A German has died. Obviously our people will be outraged about this. This is not the time to rein in that outrage." We have two or three independent sources for what he said that evening, including the report by the British consul in Munich, who very quickly learned of the speech and reported it to London. This report is now in the British archives.

Describing the evening's events, Goebbels writes in his diary that, after his brief speech: "Everyone makes a beeline for the telephones." He adds: "Now the public will take action." An interesting turn of phrase, he creates an image of men in brown uniforms and swastika arm bands reaching out to telephones to relay orders all over Germany.

The orders were that the *Aktion* (operation) was to be carried out by SA men in plain clothes, and the police were not to intervene. There was to be no bloodshed and no harm done to anyone unless, of course, Jews offered armed resistance, in which case they should expect short shrift. "There is to be no looting," stormtroopers in Kiel were told. "Nobody is to be roughed up. Foreign Jews are not to be touched. Meet any resistance with firearms. The *Aktion* is to be carried out in plain clothes and must be finished by five a.m."



Ernst vom Rath, 29-year-old legation secretary at the German embassy in Paris, was murdered in November 1938 by Herschel Grynszpan.

The result was the Night of Broken Glass, one of Germany's darkest nights. Hundreds if not thousands of Jewish shops were destroyed. About 150 synagogues were burned to the ground, including six or seven in Berlin. The following morning the news was that 38 Jews had been murdered. On Hitler's orders, 20,000 Jews were rounded up and temporarily held in concentration camps.

After the overnight reports had come in, Goebbels sums up the object of the exercise in a heartless, unrepentant diary entry: "As was to be expected, the entire nation is in uproar. This is one dead man who is costing the Jews dear. Our darling Jews will think twice in future before simply gunning down German diplomats."

In the archives I found a document dated the next day, November 10, which shows quite clearly that some kind of order had actually been issued. That morning Goebbels sent the following message to all 42 Nazi party propaganda officials (Gaupropagandaleiter) at the provincial level: "The anti-Jewish *Aktionen* [operations] must now be called off with the same rapidity with which they were launched. They have served their desired and anticipated purpose." These are the key lines in this document, I think, because they do imply that an order had been issued the day before. We don't have that earlier document, but references to it were made during the postwar interrogation of one or two of the Gauleiters, and there's also a hint in his diary that he had given certain orders the previous day.

Goebbels had to issue this second order calling off the *Aktionen* because, as we now know (a member of Hitler's private staff confirmed it to me), Hitler was furious when he heard, during the night, about the anti-Jewish outbreaks. Throughout the night, telephone calls came in reporting synagogues blazing across Germany. Hitler sent for Himmler and asked: "What the hell is going on here, Reichsführer?" Himmler replied: "Send for Goebbels, he knows." Hitler summoned Goebbels and raked him over the coals. The following morning Goebbels wrote in his diary: "I went to see the Führer at 11 o'clock, and we discussed what to do next." You can just imagine what kind of conversation took place between Hitler and Goebbels. Of course, Goebbels isn't going to write in his diary "the Führer called me a bloody idiot for having started what I did last night" – that's not the kind of diary he kept. Instead, he wrote a one-line entry to remind himself that he did have to go to see the Führer. What he did next was to issue the November 10 order calling for an immediate stop to all the anti-Jewish *Aktionen*.

Here, I'm afraid, I have to disagree with our colleague Ingrid Weckert; but if a revisionist can't revise another revisionist, I don't know what a revisionist is. Weckert rather exonerates Dr. Goebbels from any blame for the "Crystal Night." [See Weckert's book, *Flashpoint*, published by the IHR, and her article, "'Crystal Night' 1938," in the Summer 1985 *Journal*.]

However, there is no doubt in my mind that on that night, having gotten the news that the German diplomat died, Goebbels – incautiously, imprudently, and out of a sheer sense of mischief – ordered the Gauleiters to go out and start raising hell against the Jews. And, of course, it got out of hand.

Even then, Goebbels didn't realize the extent to which the world's press would seize on this incident. Few of the top Nazis had ever traveled outside of Germany. They didn't realize what the foreign press was like. They didn't realize that outside Germany, then as now, there are societies that look on German actions with a certain degree of wonderment and bafflement. The foreign press seized on this extraordinary incident, which in the over-heated political climate of 1938 Germany might have seemed little more than an extension of a street fight. But in peaceful democracies this kind of thing just didn't go on. From Berlin, reporters sent back horrific accounts to England, to the United States and to the other free countries.

Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, was one of those most scandalized by what Goebbels had done. Himmler was furious. Göring went to Hitler and demanded that Goebbels be dismissed for this outrage. Goebbels had an appalling time trying to repair the damage that he had done. It is baffling why Hitler tolerated what Goebbels had done. Hitler told Ribbentrop, "I need this man because I have other things in mind, and I am going to need a propaganda minister of the caliber of Dr. Goebbels." This can be the only explanation why he turned a blind eye to Goebbels' bloopers, and it doesn't speak very highly of Hitler.

Years later, in July 1944, when he was pleading to be put in charge of Germany's "total war" mobilization effort, Goebbels wrote this mea culpa to Hitler: "I know that I've caused you many a private worry in the 20 years I've been with you, particularly in 1938 and 1939." Although Hitler does



Lida Baarová, Czech film actress who starred in German UFA films. Goebbels' love affair with her caused a scandal in 1938. (Photo: UFA studio promotional still. Courtesy of David Irving, from his forthcoming biography.)

appoint him commissioner of total war, this is a very important admission. Obviously between Hitler and Goebbels at that time there was colossal personal strain. It wasn't just because of his affair in 1936–1938 with Lida Baarová, the Czech actress. (She is now 80 years old, still a lady of great beauty, and living in Salzburg. I went to interview her a few months ago.) Rather, it was undoubtedly the grief that Goebbels had caused Hitler by Kristallnacht.

Changes After the Outbreak of War

When war broke out in 1939, Jewish leader Chaim Weizmann, president of both the World Zionist Organization and the "Jewish Agency," made the tactical mistake of declaring war on Germany in the name of the entire Jewish people around the world. This was a crucial error because – as Professor Ernst Nolte and some other historians have argued – it somewhat justified what the Nazis then did to the Jews: the Jews declared war on Germany and Germany declared war on the Jews. [The text of Weizmann's declaration, along with an interview with Prof. Nolte, and a review of his recent book, are in the Jan.–Feb. 1994 *Journal*, pp. 15–22, 37–41.]

During a visit to Poland in June 1934, Goebbels had visited the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. He recorded his impression in his diary: "Stinking and filthy. The *Ostjuden*. There they are." Five years later, after the defeat of Poland in 1939, he visited another Jewish ghetto in that country, this time the one in Lodz. He was just as shocked by what he saw, writing in his diary: "Our task isn't a humanitarian one, but a surgical one. Otherwise one day Europe will succumb to the Jewish pestilence."

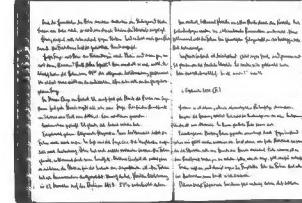
After once again setting eyes on these Jewish "specimens," the idea came to him to begin making anti-Jewish films. The result was the three infamous anti-Jewish films made by the Nazis. Interesting, isn't it? Of the approximately one thousand motion pictures made by the Nazis during their entire twelve years in power, just three were anti-Jewish: "The Rothschilds," "The Eternal Jew" and "Jud Süß" ("The Jew Süss"). These three films – the last two going down in propaganda history – were very much part of Goebbels' broad-front attack on the Jews. And yet, how many anti-German films has Hollywood made in revenge? It doesn't bear counting.

"Jud Süß," which starred some of the Third Reich's best movie actors, told the story of Joseph Süss-Oppenheimer, an 18th century "Court Jew" financier who was able to rob the Duchy of Württemberg on a Robert Maxwellian scale, and who ends up being publicly hanged – to the general plaudits of the citizens.

To my mind, "The Eternal Jew" is the most insidious of the three because, as a documentary, it purported to show Jews as they were. On Goebbels' orders Jews were filmed in the ghettos of Poland, at their most profane and their most contemptible. He wanted yards and yards of footage showing Jews as caricatures. With this he mingled footage of rats invading bags of wheat and grain. Concluding the film, in one of its two versions, was an appalling, stomach-churning scene, filmed in close-up, of Jewish ritual slaughter of cattle. This was appended to the end of the film in what I think was a rather crude and vulgar tactic. So two versions of "The Eternal Jew" were made – one, with the ritual slaughter scene, for adults, and a second, cleaned up version, for children and others with weaker stomachs. But even the knowledge that there was a stronger version had a propaganda effect on people.

Germany Must Perish

In March 1941, Goebbels visited the "Warthegau," a portion of Poland that was incorporated into the German Reich. After a meeting there with the local Gauleiter, Arthur Greiser, Goebbels recorded in his diary: "There has been all manner of liquidating going on here, particularly of the Jewish garbage. That's got to be."



In these pages from his diary, Goebbels writes about the outbreak of the German-Polish conflict in 1939. During the final weeks of the war, Goebbels had his diary photographically recorded in reduced size on glass plates, a new Agfa process that was an early form of microfiche. At the end of the war, Soviet Russian troops seized these plates, which remained suppressed in Moscow for 45 years. (From Irving's forthcoming biography.)



One of the three anti-Jewish films made during the Third Reich era was "Jud Süß" ("The Jew Süss"), which was based on the life of Joseph Süss-Oppenheimer, a powerful "Court Jew" in 18th century Germany. This advertisement announcing the premiere of the Terra film production appeared in the Berlin weekly "Das Reich," Sept. 29,

A crucial episode in the “Final Solution,” as far as Goebbels is concerned – and this has been very little highlighted – came in 1941 with the publication in the United States of a strange little book, *Germany Must Perish!*, by an American named Theodore N. Kaufman. In it, Kaufman – who was, presumably, a Jew – recommends the castration of the entire German people, so that the Germans would literally perish within one generation. “Germany must perish forever!” wrote Kaufman. “In fact – not in fancy.” Published at a time when the United States was still officially not at war against Germany, this book was given respectful, even laudatory attention by *Time* magazine, *The Washington Post*, and other periodicals.

1940. An ad for Coca-Cola (“Already recognizable in the bottle”) appeared directly below.

Goebbels seized with delight on this nasty propaganda diatribe against the German people, with all its Freudian undertones. “This Jew [Kaufman] has done a disservice to the enemy,” Goebbels commented. “If he had composed the book at my behest he couldn’t have done a better job.”

Goebbels looked into the feasibility of having a million copies of a German translation printed up and distributed to German soldiers. He shelved the project because his lawyers pointed out that the project would violate US copyrights. You may laugh but, as he wrote in his diary, the reasoning was that if Germany violated American copyrights, America might feel justified in violating Germany’s very valuable copyrights. He had to wait another few months until certain historical events in Hawaii resulted in American copyrights not being so valuable after all.

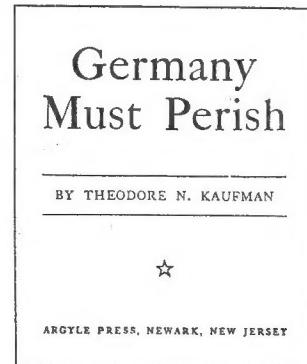
Kaufman’s book figures in Goebbels’ diary as being the turning point that justified, in his mind, adopting a much more radical solution to the Jewish problem.

In August 1941, he went to show Hitler *Germany Must Perish* in translation, and persuaded him to agree to a plan by which every German Jew would be fitted out with a yellow Star of David badge with the word Jude. Goebbels argued that the Jews had to be tagged, and Hitler agreed. It’s interesting to note – and this can’t be emphasized enough – that again and again it’s Goebbels who goes to Hitler with radical plans, and Hitler agrees. It’s never Hitler initiating these plans. This is true even when the diary appears to indicate otherwise, as in the case of Kristallnacht and other episodes when, for reasons of politics and posterity, Goebbels felt it necessary to write: “The Führer fully endorsed what I had done.”

I have to point out that we are reading the diary of a Propaganda Minister, a master dissembler whose diary has frequently been found to be untrustworthy on earlier occasions. And when dealing with what he writes about a man such as Hitler, who is dead and can’t defend himself, you have to be extra careful. It may stick in the craw of other historians when I say this, but it doesn’t matter if the man is Hitler or Roosevelt or Stalin: If he’s not here to defend himself you have to be ten times more careful when trying to write the truth. That’s why I’ve been additionally careful in evaluating the diary of Dr. Goebbels.

During a visit to the Eastern front in November 1941, Goebbels toured the German-occupied Baltic states – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. On this occasion as well, he viewed the ghettos. In Lithuania he spent a whole afternoon touring the Jewish ghetto in Kaunas (Kovno), and wrote disapproving passages in his diary about what he found there. As he records, Goebbels was also told that the Jews in the Baltic states had been massacred on a colossal scale, not by the Germans but by the Lithuanians and Latvians themselves, even as the German troops arrived, in revenge for what the Jews had done to them during the year of Bolshevik terror following the Soviet Russian takeover in June 1940.

When German troops arrived in the Baltic states, they found that the local Jews had largely fled or been evacuated. The Germans then decided to evacuate the German Jews to these Baltic territories. I don’t know why they hit on this mad solution, because if the Baltic peoples themselves didn’t like their own Jews, these territories certainly weren’t going to be very safe for foreign Jews. But the Germans didn’t really care.



Title page of “Germany Must Perish,” by Theodore N. Kaufman, a Manhattan-born Jewish business man who was chairman of the “American Federation of Peace.” In this 1941 book, Kaufman outlines a plan for the systematic sterilization of the entire German population. This genocidal work was given respectful reviews in the American press. Typical was the one in “Time magazine,” March 24, 1941, which called Kaufman’s plan a “sensational idea.”



Theodore N. Kaufman

Goebbels and Speer

It may surprise you to learn that the prime mover behind the evacuation of Berlin's Jews was less Dr. Goebbel than that great hero of the postwar media, Albert Speer. If you read Speer's genuine diary, not the sanitized one he gave to the German Federal Archives, but his genuine diary, you'll find that from early 1941, when he was chief of construction for Berlin, he makes repeated references to the "Main Resettlement Department" ("Hauptabteilung Umsiedlung"), which he controlled.

You see, Speer – who was a close friend of Goebbels and his wife – had been given the task of rebuilding Berlin – a fine and appropriate task for an ambitious young architect with great vision, and, it has to be said, also great ability. In order to rebuild Berlin, though, he had first to clear slums, and this required that he house the slum-dwellers elsewhere. So, wanting to clear the Jewish areas of west Berlin, he persuaded Goebbels to start a campaign to drive the Jews out of the city, and thus empty their apartments. Speer had his eye on something like 24,000 Jewish houses and apartments in Berlin.

In early 1941, Speer and Goebbels, each for reasons of his own, together started this campaign to drive the Jews from the city. Goebbels, who was Gauleiter of Berlin, wanted to have his city "free of Jews," and Speer wanted to clear out those 24,000 apartments so that he could rebuild Berlin.

So, trainload by trainload, Jews were shipped out of Berlin to anywhere – nobody really cared. The chiefs of police, Kurt Daluege and Helldorff joined in because they were pals of Goebbels. Only occasionally did Goebbels have to get approval from Hitler, in broad general terms, for yet another operation against the Jews. We know how many Jews were in those trains – there were about 130 trainloads altogether – because in almost every case we know exactly how many Jews were loaded onto each train.

We know the exact route and destination of those trains because, by some quirk of historical fate, the actual rail records have survived. They show that there were around a thousand Jews per trainload – sometimes as few as about 650 passengers, sometimes as many as 1030. The first of these trainloads left Berlin on October 18, 1941 – to the plaudits of Speer and Goebbels. These rail deportations were irregular because this was a low priority program. At a time when German troops were fighting a desperate battle outside Moscow, rail rolling stock and rail networks were needed, above all, for munitions, supplies, troop reinforcements, wounded soldiers, hospital trains, and all the rest. But whenever they could, Goebbels and Speer would deport another trainload of Jews.

Single Jews with no families were the first to be rounded up and deported. If the family had a "privileged" member – for example, a Jew who had married a non-Jew, or a Jewish man who was working in a munitions factory – that one member saved the entire family. Jews who weren't privileged in some way were liable to be picked up without warning, allowed only 40 kilograms of baggage, put on a train and shipped out.

In one particular case, we know that a trainload of 1030 Jews left Berlin on November 27, 1941, destined for Riga, Latvia. It's recorded in the Speer diary and in the Goebbels diary. It arrived at a place called Skiatowa, eight kilometers outside Riga, on the morning of November 30, 1941, in the midst of a mass extermination. So these newly-arrived Jews were taken along with local Riga Jews, lined up along pits, and shot.

That very day, Heinrich Himmler went to see Hitler at his headquarters. In my book *Hitler's War* [in the 1991 Focal Point edition, between pages 506–507], you'll find a facsimile of Himmler's own handwritten notes of his telephone conversations on that day, when he made a couple of phone calls from Hitler's headquarters. One note records a call at 1:30 p.m., Nov. 30, 1941, to Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich. It reads: "Jew transport from Berlin. No liquidation."

Until I found these bundles of telephone notes, not one historian in the world had bothered to read them or quote them. They were written in old-fashioned handwriting, you see, and the German historians rather like to have the documents they consult printed, especially in the Nuremberg bound volumes, and even better, with illustrations. They don't like reading old German handwriting.

What's the explanation for Himmler's words here? My theory is that he may have said to Hitler: "Mein Führer, I've got a bit of a problem housing these Jews we're shipping out of Berlin. Why don't we just bump them off?" and Hitler probably answered: "Out of the question." So Himmler sends a frantic message to Heydrich, saying they're not to be liquidated. But it's too late, they're already dead – the whole trainload. We know this because we have the timetable of what happened that day.

On March 5, 1942, Goebbels received a report from Heydrich about guerilla warfare in the occupied east. Blaming the Jews for this as well, he comments:

It is therefore understandable that many of them must pay with their lives for this. Anyway, in my view the more Jews who are liquidated the more consolidated the situation in Europe will be after the war. Let there be no phony sentimentalism about it. The Jews are Europe's misfortune. They must somehow be eliminated otherwise we are in danger of being eliminated by them.

Here I want to mention something that I'm always very adamant about. Although we revisionists say that gas chambers didn't exist, and that the "factories of death" didn't exist, there is no doubt in my mind that on the Eastern front large numbers of Jews were massacred, by criminals with guns – SS men, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, whatever – to get rid of them. They were made to line up next to pits or ditches, and then shot. The eyewitness accounts I've seen of this are genuine and reliable.

Wannsee Conference

In late 1941 Heydrich sent a message to all the relevant ministers and state secretaries calling them to a high-level conference on the Jewish question. This is the famous Wannsee Conference, which took place on January 20, 1942, at a villa in suburban Berlin. There the officials discussed how to deal with all the administrative problems of large-scale transports of Jews. There's no reference to killing Jews, not even an indication, anywhere in the Conference record.

Goebbels was not present at that meeting because the invitation that was sent to the Propaganda Ministry was addressed to Leopold Gutterer, the Ministry State Secretary and Goebbels' number two man. Gutterer is still alive, age 92. I went to interview him two or three times before I was banned from Germany (on November 9, 1993). He told me he never got the Wannsee meeting invitation, that it was probably intercepted by Werner Naumann, who was his rival on Goebbels staff.

Although Goebbels did not hear in advance of the meeting, you'll find in Goebbels' diary – in his entry of March 7, 1942 – that a copy of the well-known Wannsee Conference protocol was sent to him. Nobody else has spotted this.

There were still eleven million Jews in Europe, Goebbels dictated on that day, accurately summarizing the document. "For the time being they are to be concentrated in the east [until] later; possibly an island like Madagascar can be assigned to them after the war." It all raised a host of "delicate questions," he added. "Undoubtedly there will be a multitude of personal tragedies," he wrote airily, "But this is unavoidable. The situation now is ripe for a final settlement of the Jewish question."

More chilling is another diary entry a few weeks later. On March 27, 1942, Goebbels dictates a lengthy passage about another SS document that had been submitted to him, and which appears to have been much uglier in its content. "Beginning with Lublin," he states, "the Jews are now being deported eastward from the General Government [occupied Poland]. The procedure is pretty barbaric and one that beggars description, and there's not much left of the Jews. Broadly speaking one can probably say that 60 percent of them will have to be liquidated, while only 40 percent can be put to work."

It's a very ugly passage, and it's easy to link this diary passage with everything we've seen in the movies and on television since then. He's describing "Schindler's List" here – or is he? I don't know. All he's actually saying here is that the Jews are having a pretty rigorous time. They're being deported, it's happening in a systematic way, and not many of them are going to survive it.

When I visited the Hoover Institution library in Stanford, California, to see the portion of the original Goebbels diary that they have there, this was the first page I asked to see. And when I was in the Moscow archives to examine the glass plate copy of the diary, this was also the first plate I searched for. I knew that if the diary had actually been copied by the Nazis in Berlin, and the glass plate version in Moscow matches the text in the Hoover library, there's no way anyone could have faked it. And there it is on the glass plate in Moscow, identical. As a final clincher, this portion was also microfilmed in 1947 in New York from the text that is held by the Hoover library. So there are three different indications that this is a genuine quotation from a genuine Goebbels document.

The conclusion I draw therefore is that, between them, Speer and Goebbels started a ruthless campaign in 1941 to drive out and deport the Jews from Berlin – Goebbels for political reasons, and out of sheer visceral hatred of the Jews, and Speer for the more mundane reasons of real estate and ambition. They didn't really care what happened to the Jews.

Even so, we must put all this in the context of the brutal war being fought on the Eastern front at the time, in which neither side was giving the other any quarter. By this time (March 1942) we British had just begun bombing German towns on a ruthless scale. The devastating aerial bombardment of

Lübeck, for example, came just two days after this diary entry. It's not difficult to imagine Dr. Goebbels' attitude: "So what if Jews are being machine-gunned into pits? They had it coming to them. They declared war on us, and this is no time for sympathy and sentiment." That's the way he may well have looked at it.

By this time, ugly rumors were already circulating abroad, fueled by British propaganda. The London *Daily Telegraph* quoted Polish claims that seven thousand of Warsaw's Jews were being killed each day, often in what it called "gas chambers." One of Goebbels' worried civil servants responded by telexing a request for information to Hans Frank's press office in Krakow and to the propaganda field office in Warsaw. The reassuring reply spoke of the Jews being used to construct defences and roads. Be that as it may, in Goebbels' files the original press report, which had merely summarized the British newspaper item, was rubber-stamped *Geheime Reichssache*, "Secret Reich Matter."

How much did Goebbels know? Among his surviving files are papers suggesting a broad general knowledge of atrocities. One is from a large collection of original Goebbels' papers on file at the Jewish Yivo institute in New York.

Reporting to Goebbels on November 11, 1942, his legal expert, Dr Hans Schmidt-Leonhardt, whom he had sent to inspect conditions in Hans Frank's Polish dominions, noted that the Warsaw police had deemed it too dangerous to visit the ghetto there; in the Krakow ghetto he had found all the Jews put to work; in Lublin the ghetto had already been cleared away, and there were now bloody disturbances. "As a Geheime Reichssache," reported the legal specialist, "Frank related to us the following characteristic recent instance: ..." But whatever this was we cannot know, because a shocked member of Goebbels' staff cut off the rest of the page.

This is something that you have to look for, this "top secret" endorsement. By contrast, the Auschwitz documents found in the Moscow archives by French researcher Jean-Claude Pressac have no "secret" classification whatsoever. But this document, with its missing half page, tells me that Goebbels knew damn well that something ugly was probably happening on the Eastern front, and that he didn't want members of his staff asking awkward questions, so he had part of the page torn off and locked away in his safe.

I sometimes wonder what his stenographer, Richard Otte, must have thought about the man whose words he transcribed day by day for this diary.

So there are the facts about Dr. Goebbels and the "final solution." If we're looking for a culprit, if we're looking for a criminal behind the "final solution" or the "Holocaust," whatever it was, for the man who started it in motion, then it was undoubtedly Dr. Goebbels first and foremost. Not Julius Streicher, not Adolf Hitler, nor any of the other Nazis. Goebbels was the moving force, and the brain behind it in every sense of the word. We still don't know if he knew what exactly happened at the other end, but then this isn't surprising, because we ourselves don't know either.

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About the Author

David Irving is one of the world's most widely read and influential historians. He is the author of the more than two dozen published works on 20th century history, including *Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich*.
